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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 001555

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PHUM PGOV PREL CU NL SP

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/EU/CUBA: DUTCH STRADDLING THE FENCE

REF: A. STATE 102505

¶B. THE HAGUE 1439

Classified By: Political Counselor Andrew Schofer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) In a meeting with POLOFF on June 3, Jan Jaap Groenemeyer, senior advisor on Cuban issues at the Dutch MFA, took issue with Ref A demarche points describing the EU's new approach to Cuba as a failure. He asserted that results were more mixed: some prisoners had been released but new ones arrested; new repressive measures were balanced by the fact that the regime allowed Roque's meeting of dissidents. Preparing for the COLAT on June 7, the Dutch see merit in Spain's argument that extending the policy might eventually produce more positive results. Groenemeyer acknowledged that some new ideas were on the table, but would not discuss them in detail, noting that "the decision is really at the ministerial level now" (presumably referring to the upcoming GAERC.)

¶2. (C) Groenemeyer responded more positively, however, to the specific proposals outlined in ref a. Some EU countries, he said, already provide information access to the opposition by making the internet available to them at Embassies or in other ways. The Dutch modestly support independent libraries with funds and books. Groenemeyer expected the COLAT and GAERC would discuss the idea of inviting key opposition members to Europe. As for a visa ban for human rights abusers, the Dutch support the idea in principle, but "it has not been raised by the hard-liners, such as the Czechs." The EU as a whole does not favor a visa ban, he added, because it would have little more than symbolic value since the persons in question usually do not leave the island anyway. Groenemeyer thought it was a good idea for EU states to call in Cuba's EU Ambassadors for human rights discussions. Finally, he understood that some EU embassies in Cuba do send delegations to visit other parts of the island to meet opposition figures, albeit "unofficially."

¶3. (C) Comment: Groenemeyer's equivocation and reluctance to call the new measures a failure in light of the record suggests the Dutch will continue straddling the EU fence (ref b). Facilitating an EU consensus remains the highest priority for the Dutch, even if this means simply tweaking current measures to find a compromise that avoids a direct confrontation with Havana. End Comment.

SOBEL